



SURVEY OF CURRENT BUSINESS



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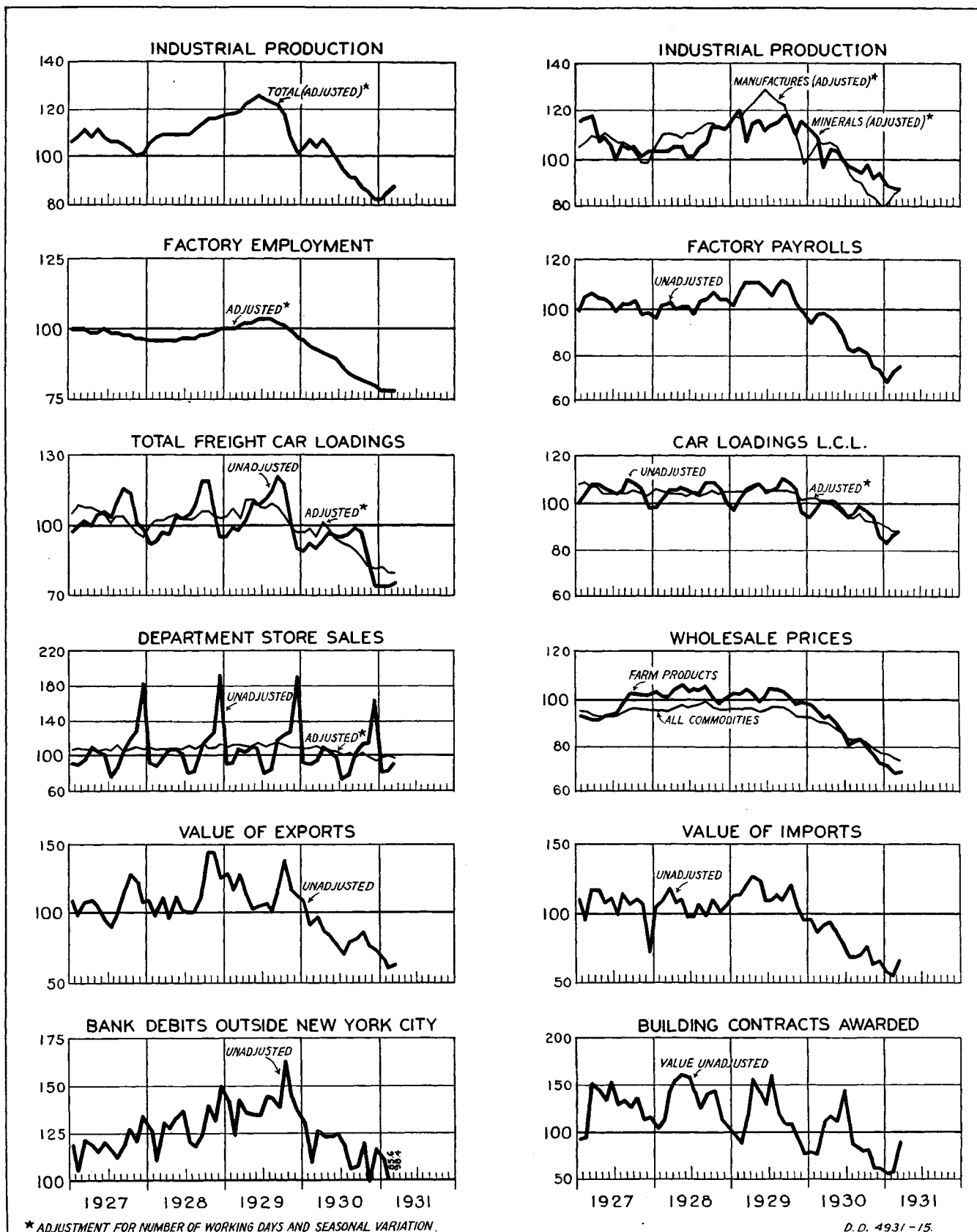
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MONTHLY BUSINESS INDICATORS

1923-1925=100



PRELIMINARY SUMMARY FOR APRIL

Business operations in the country as a whole during the first weeks of April were confused in nature, but in general were marked by a recession in several of the basic industries. The decline was largely seasonal, but it indicated that the momentum of the preceding months had not been of sufficient force to assure a sustained rise. Composite business indicators for the week ended April 18 showed a slight decline after four weeks' rise.

Renewed weakness in the wholesale price level, after some weeks of apparent stability, as well as drops in steel-mill activity and electric-power production, were important elements during the middle week of April. The Fisher index dropped to a new low for the depression at 74.6, compared with 78.5 at the opening of the year and 91.3 for the corresponding week in 1930. Distribution of goods through primary channels continued to run less than at the same time last year, as indicated by the returns on car loadings. The decrease in car loadings during the opening week of April was less than seasonal.

The daily average value of new building contracts

awarded during the opening weeks of April was on approximately the same level as reported for the closing weeks of March, but was still materially under the same period in 1929 and 1930. The production of bituminous coal decreased during the opening weeks of the month and was under the corresponding period last year. Steel-mill activity continued the decline which started during the closing week of March, and was considerably under the April, 1930, activity. Petroleum production recorded an upward turn during the second two weeks of April after remaining at approximately the same level for a 3-week period.

Interest rates on time money at the middle of April were higher than at the close of March, while rates on call money remained about stationary, excepting during the second week of April when a slight temporary rise occurred. Average prices of representative stocks declined from the closing week of March, but at the middle of April were still some 4 per cent above the December low

BUSINESS CONDITIONS IN MARCH

General business operations as pictured by available composite indexes did not make any noticeable advance during March. On the other hand, no marked losses were recorded.

The volume of manufacturing, according to the weighted index of the Federal Reserve Board, showed a slightly greater than normal increase during March over February, but was still some 17 per cent under March, 1930. Greater than normal seasonal increases were registered by the iron and steel, textiles, leather and shoes, and the stone, clay, and glass industries. Less than the normal seasonal increases between February and March were registered by food products, automobiles, nonferrous metals, and tobacco manufactures. The greatest increase, after seasonal adjustments are made, was recorded by the iron and steel industry, and food products registered the largest decrease. All manufacturing groups, except tobacco manufactures, were operating on a plane under that of March, 1930.

The number of wage earners employed in factories as a whole was slightly greater than in the preceding month, but the seasonally corrected index of employment was about the same as for February.

Carloadings during the first quarter of 1931 failed to record the estimated level, with March furnishing a considerable share of the decrease. During March, shipments of miscellaneous freight, which includes manufactured goods, and shipments of less than car-load lot merchandise dropped to new low levels for the current depression, allowing for seasonal variation. Loadings of forest products and of livestock, seasonally adjusted, established new low records for the entire postwar period.

General construction during March was characterized by a strong seasonal gain, the F. W. Dodge Corporation reporting a gain of 57 per cent over February in value of contracts let.

The

WEEKLY BUSINESS INDICATORS

[Weekly average, 1923-1925=100]

ITEM	1931			1930			1929			ITEM	1931			1930			1929		
	Apr. 25	Apr. 18	Apr. 11	Apr. 26	Apr. 19	Apr. 12	Apr. 27	Apr. 20	Apr. 13		Apr. 25	Apr. 18	Apr. 11	Apr. 26	Apr. 19	Apr. 12	Apr. 27	Apr. 20	Apr. 13
*Composite index N																			

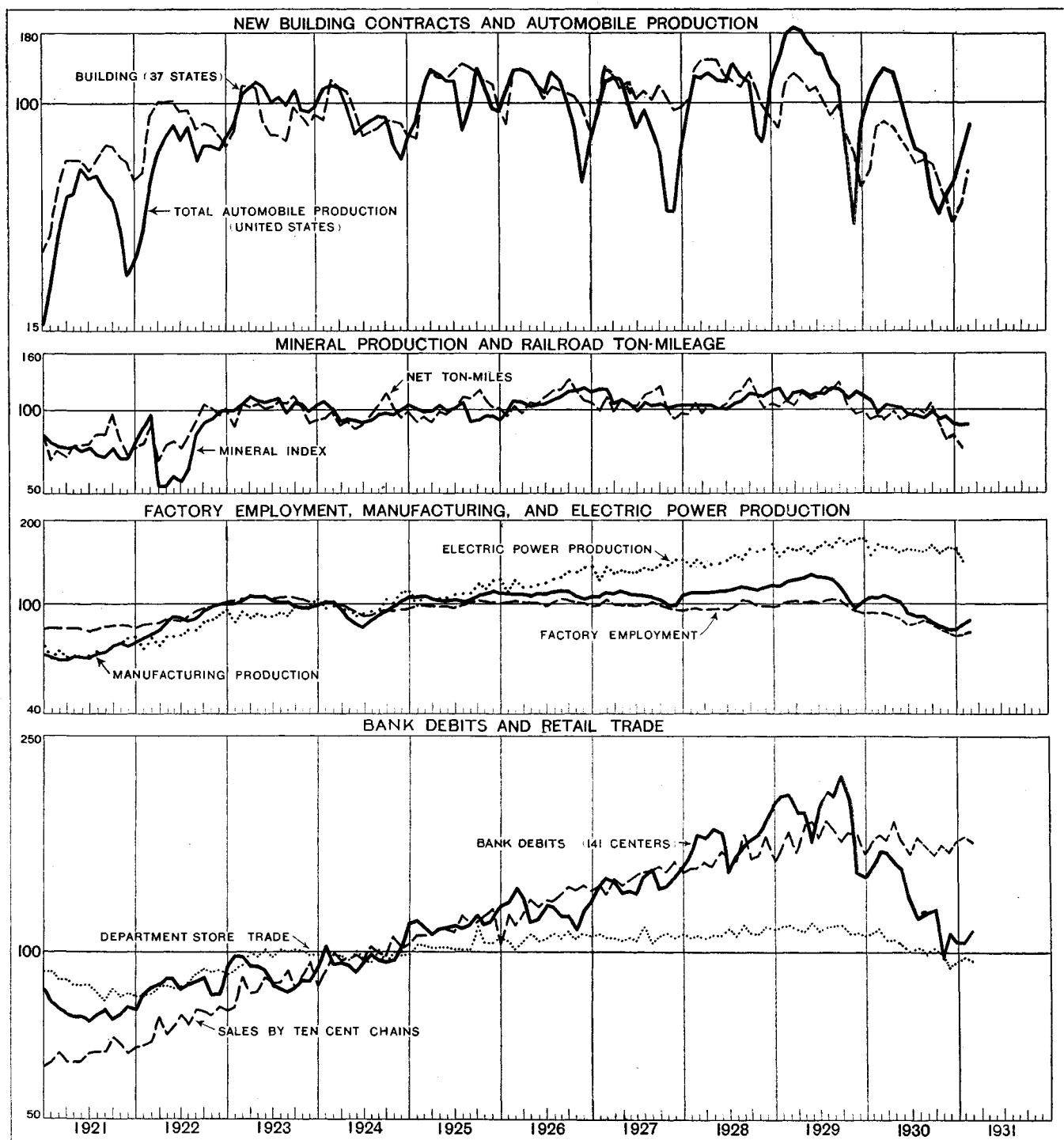
WHOLESALE PRICES

NOTE.—Prices to producer on farm products and market price of wool and grain prices are from *U. S. Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Agriculture Economics*, nonferrous metals from the *Engineering and Mining Journal-Press*, except tin, which is from the *American Metal Market*. All other prices are from *U. S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics*. So far as possible all quotations represent prices to producer or at mill.

COMMODITIES	Unit	ACTUAL PRICE (dollars)			RELATIVE PRICE				
		February, 1931	March, 1931	March, 1930	1926 average = 100				
					January, 1931	February, 1931	March, 1931	February, 19	

MEASURES OF BUSINESS ACTIVITY

[Relative numbers, monthly average 1923-1925, taken as 100]



REVIEW OF PRINCIPAL BRANCHES OF BUSINESS

TEXTILES

Activity in the textiles industry during March, as measured by the consumption of electrical energy for power purposes, was 2 per cent under that recorded during February and 2.3 per cent under March, 1930.

Production of cotton textiles increased during March in respect to February and was in excess of the January production. The March production also was 3.9 per cent over that of March, 1930, but was 8.5 per cent under the production recorded in March, 1929. New orders and shipments at the end of March were all materially above the figures for these items recorded for the corresponding period in 1930, while unfilled orders at the close of the month were slightly under last year. Stocks of cotton textiles at the close of March were under the figure reported at the close of February, and were materially under the stocks on hand at the close of March, 1930, and also slightly under the 1929 figure.

Receipts of raw cotton during March totaled 446,847 bales, a drop of 66,560 bales from the total February receipts. In 1929 and 1930 an increase in receipts was

recorded for the same period. The total March receipts of cotton were 35,332 bales less than receipts reported for March, 1930, and were 29

METALS

Ice conditions prevented the shipment of iron ore from the upper Great Lakes ports during March. This is a normal seasonal condition. Stocks of iron ore at the close of March were 8 per cent below the stocks at the close of February, but were 26.6 per cent over those at the close of March, 1930. The consumption of iron ore by furnaces totaled 2,835,000 long tons, against 2,368,000 long tons in February and 4,628,000 long tons in March, 1930.

Pig-iron production during March witnessed an increase over February, but it was of considerably smaller proportions than is usual for this period. The total production of 2,032,000 long tons during March was 19 per cent over that of February, but was 37.4 per cent under the March production in 1930.

The output of steel ingots registered an increase of 19.6 per cent over February, but was 29.7 per cent under March, 1930. The ratio of total steel-ingot production to capacity declined to 55 per cent during March, as against 83 per cent for March, 1930. Steel furnaces in blast at the end of March totaled 116, with a capacity of 67,880 long tons per day. At the close of March, 1930, a total of 185 furnaces were in blast, with a total capacity of 106,080 long tons per

AUTOMOBILES

Automobile production showed a continuation of the upward trend, the March production being the largest since June, 1930. The output included 230,835 passenger cars, 45,096 trucks, and 410 taxicabs, representing an increase of 56,402 vehicles over February. The current March total compared with 396,388 in March, 1930, and 585,455 in March, 1929. Increased production in March, although due in large part to seasonal causes, reflects a substantial pick-up in the actual demand for cars. An increase also was shown in Canadian automotive output, the March figure being the largest since June last year.

CONSTRUCTION AND LUMBER

The volume of contracts awarded for new construction and engineering projects increased in value materially during March, the figure being the largest since June last year. The number of projects and the floor space involved were also materially above those of February. The value of contracts awarded for all types of construction was 57.2 per cent above that of February. The value of contracts awarded for residential buildings increased by 29.6 per cent in

respect to February, and the value of non residential building contracts increased by 48.8 per cent.

Construction costs decreased slightly during the month and were still about 6 per cent under those for the corresponding period in 1930. Fire losses in the United States and Canada in March were

FUELS

The production of bituminous coal in the United States registered an increase of 7.9 per cent from the February output, but was 2.4 per cent lower than during March, 1930. Anthracite production decreased seasonally during March, being 12 per cent under the output of February and 16.2 per cent under that of March last year. The drop in anthracite production this year, from February to March, however, was only 646,000 short tons, while in 1930 the decreased production for the same period amounted to 1,577,000 short tons.

Production of beehive coke in the United States decreased by 8.6 per cent during March in respect to February, and the production was about 48.8 per cent under that reported for March, 1930.

HIDES AND LEATHER

The production of hides, as shown by the number of cattle and sheep slaughtered under Federal inspection, increased during March. Production of cattle skins was less than in March, 1930, while the number of sheepskins exceeded the year previous. In Canada increases were recorded over February, and production during the current March exceeded that of March last year.

Wholesale prices of hides increased during March as compared with February, but were still 36.6 per

FOODSTUFFS

Receipts, shipments, and local slaughter of cattle and calves increased over the month of February and were of about the same proportions as for March, 1930. The production of Federally inspected beef and veal rose above the February figure. Cold-storage holdings of these products at the end of March decreased by 10.2 per cent from those of the previous month, and were 32 per cent under those of the year previous.

The visible supply of wheat in the United States increased slightly from the preceding month, while the Canadian visible supply decreased slightly. The United States figure was 35.2 per cent above that of March, 1930, and the Canadian figure was 6.5 above last year. The visible supply of corn was greater than in February and was 12.5 per cent over that of March, 1930. Grindings of corn decreased slightly during March in respect to February and were 10.3 per cent under March last year.

Cold-storage holdings of butter showed a loss of 41.2 per cent from those at the close of February and were 41.1 per cent smaller than holdings of the year previous. The amount of cheese held in cold storage also decreased from the February holdings but was only slightly below the amount reported at the close of March, 1930.

The visible supply of coffee at the close of March was greater than at the close of the month previous. Receipts of coffee in Brazil were less than for February but were 23.8 per cent over those during March, 1930. The clearances of coffee from Brazil were slightly less than for February, but were 33.4 per cent above those of March last year.

GRAY IRON CASTINGS ¹

Month	(Average tons per foundry)									
	1929					1930				
	Production	New business	Unfilled orders	Material received	Material on hand	Production	New business	Unfilled orders	Material received	Material on hand
January.....	298.3	300.1	299.6	276.5	400.1	177.5	164.5	107.7	194.8	319.5
February.....	260.2	264.2	252.3	209.0	369.5	190.5	209.2	165.7		

